

A SECOND
LETTER

To Mr. G.

In ANSWER to
TWO LETTERS

Lately Published concerning

The Conference

At the D. of P.

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A SECOND
LETTER
To Mr. G.

SIR,

YOU may wonder that I continue my Application to your self, when two Gentlemen, have appeared in Print so lately for You; but the Character they give of You is so extraordinary, that I have no mind to change my man; and therefore hope you will at last generously undertake the Defence of your own Cause. The Authour of the first Letter, saith, *Those that know you better think there is not an honest Man in the Nation, and that if you have wronged me it is the first wrong you ever did in your Life.* I am afraid some will suspect your Friend was not in earnest when he wrote this; and that it rather looks like libelling the Nation than commending You. But because it is so rare a thing to meet with a Person set forth with such Advantage; you cannot blame me for desiring to hold a Correspondence with You in the way of Letters. For all Mr. M's Arguments for *Verbal Conferences* have not prevailed.

prevailed upon me; and therefore I proceed in Writing another Letter to You, looking on this Way as much freer from sudden heats and surprises, more cautious and deliberate, and less liable to Cavils and Misrepresentations. And methinks the Account Mr. *M.* gives of our Conference, confutes all his Arguments; unless they be better managed in *Coffee-houses* and other places, *i. e.* with more Temper and Fairness than he represents ours to have been.

The Truth is, the Experience I have had of the Disingenuity both in and after them hath made me not very fond of them. But it may be *Verbal Conferences* are most agreeable to *Oral Tradition*; but we who prefer a Written Rule as far more certain, rather chuse to publish in Writing the Sense of our Minds, than leave it to the arbitrary Representing of others Words.

Which I had suffered so much by, that I was forced for my own Vindication to betake my self to Writing a former Letter to you, wherein I complained of the Injury done me by false and imperfect Copies of our Conference dispersed by you. *If that were the first wrong you ever did in your Life*, I am very sorry you should begin with me. For after all that your Friends have said for you I am still of the same Opinion. And in this Letter shall more fully give you my Reasons.

But I hope you are not now *one hundred and fifty Miles off*, lest I be told again *that I take advantage of your great Distance*, as though I durst not write to you at a less distance than between *L.* and *Ch.* But in case you were there still, am I the less injured by your going so far? or less obliged to vindicate my self among those who had been abused by false Reports and Copies of the Conference?

I now

I now apply my self to what Mr. *M.* hath said for you in Answer to my former Letter.

Mr. *M.* saith p. 5. *you were far from making great Boasts of a Victory after the Conference.* Must I rely on Mr. *M.*'s Authority, against *the Infallibility of Oral Tradition?* The matter of fact was deliver'd to me from several Persons who themselves heard you, and in several Places. What must I now believe according to your *Infallible Rule of Oral Tradition?* Here are several Witnesses of unquestionable Credit, who had it (not by a long series from Father to Son, but) immediately from your own Mouth; *who could not easily forget what they heard you say, and would not out of malice alter it,* and yet your own Advocate declares expressly contrary to them, and thinks I am bound to believe his Testimony against them all. I pray, Sir, consider what a reflexion this is upon your *Rule*, and what little security we can have for our *Faith* then, by *Oral Tradition.* If so many Persons who were competent Judges of what they heard themselves, and whose Testimony I had no reason to suspect, could so strangely deceive me, at so little a distance, what Infallibility can you pretend in bare Tradition of matters of Faith, when the things themselves are so much harder to conceive and deliver entire, and the distance so very much greater? Either therefore you must renounce your Advocate if you hold to the Infallibility of Oral Tradition; or if you hold to Mr. *M.* you must renounce your Rule of Faith.

Mr. *M.* seems to deny the charge of your giving out *false and imperfect Copies* of the Conference. But that which I charged you chiefly with, was from one that was received from your own hands; and the rest I saw afterwards agreed with it. And yet Mr. *M.* cannot deny that the Copies given out contained *lame and un-*

finished Discourses p. 5. *that the Noise and Wrangling might hinder the Writers from being so exact*, p. 15. *that we parted in so great a hurry, that those things which were spoken were not written, nor some, perhaps, of what was written so nicely exact, &c.* p. 19. *that in the latter part of this Dispute things were not set down so exactly as they ought to have been*, *ibid.* *that the Disputations of the Conference are lame and imperfect*, p. 25. These being the words of your own Advocate, had I not just cause to complain that such Copies should be dispersed abroad, as a *true Account of the Conference* between us; whereas himself confesses them to have been *so lame and imperfect*? And yet these were given about with great industry and care, as though an entire Account of what passed at the Conference, were contained in them; and few days passed, but I heard great Boasts were made of this Conference, and some said *that they had it under my hand that I was baffled*.

I think therefore, I had reason to complain, of *imperfect Copies*, since Mr. M. confesses they were no better. But this is not all, for I had said the Copies I had seen were *false* as well as *imperfect*.

To make out this charge I must insist on some particulars, as they are in that Copy, which was given by your self.

When Mr. T. declared himself satisfied as to the Grounds of Faith, without the Roman Churches Infallibility, which was the true state of the Question debated in the first part (of which more by and by.) He desired to know for his own satisfaction, *How you would prove the Church of Rome to be infallible*? This in your Copy is said to be put by me. And lest this might be thought a mere casual mistake, I am certainly informed that Mr. M. told a Gentleman to whom he gave a Copy, that I proposed the Question about
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the Church of *Rome* Infallibility (as though I did it on purpose to divert the Discourse) whereas Mr. *T.* declaring himself satisfied with the Answers given about *the Grounds of our Certainty*, desired that he might propose a Question to you, *How you could prove the Church of Rome to be Infallible?* And in a Copy sent from *Ch.* where you dispersed it, the Title of the second Dispute is, *Stillingsfleet's first Question, How do you prove, &c.* so that my Name was here falsely put in; and it is easie to guess with what design. But to proceed.

When you said *the Infallibility of the Church of Rome consisted in following the universal Testimony of all Traditionary Christians,*

Your Copy makes me ask a very wise Question upon it, *viz. How does it appear that the Church of Rome is Infallible in Tradition?*

Whereas I put two Questions to you.

(1.) *How does it appear that the Church of Rome is Infallible in the sense and meaning of Tradition?*

(2.) *Is this Tradition a Rule of Faith distinct from Scripture?*

The Design of which Questions was to shew,

(1.) That to receive a Doctrine by mere Tradition can afford no Infallible Ground of Faith, unless persons be assured of the true *Sense* and *Meaning* of the Doctrine so delivered. As for instance, suppose the Doctrine delivered be *that Christ was the Son of God*; if the Infallibility of Tradition goes no farther than the bare delivery from Father to Son, then Faith can go no farther than the general words, though an Heretical sense may lie under them. If the Infallibility doth extend to the sense and meaning of these words, then either every Traditionary Christian is to give this sense which will make a very large Infallibility in the whole Body of Traditionary Christians, or else the explain-

ning the sense and meaning of Tradition must belong to a certain Order of Men by virtue of a divine Promise. If so, then the Infallibility of Tradition cannot consist *in holding the same Doctrine to day that was delivered yesterday, and so up to the time of our Blessed Saviour*, as you asserted. For, if the Church may explain the Sense and Meaning of Tradition, so as to oblige Men to believe that by virtue of such explication which they were not obliged to before, then it is impossible the Infallibility of Tradition should lie in a constant Tradition from Father to Son. For they have no power to oblige to any more than they received: but according to the Doctrine of the Church of Rome (and some will tell you, it is Heresie to deny it, and I appeal to *F. Warner* if it be not) the Church hath power and authority to explain the Sense and Meaning of Tradition, so as persons are obliged upon pain of Damnation to believe that Sense and Meaning of Tradition which the present Church delivers. As will Appear by an undeniable instance. The Tradition of a Real Presence in the *Eucharist* is allowed on all hands; but all the Controversie is and hath been for some Ages, what the Sense and Meaning of this Tradition is? Whether it be a Real Presence by way of Efficacy and Influence, or by a mystical Union, or by a substantial Change of the very Elements into the Body and Blood of Christ. The Tradition of the Real Presence may be preserved under every one of these Explications: the Question now is whether it be sufficient to adhere to the general Tradition of the Church; or it be not necessary to Salvation to adhere to the Churches Explication of the Sense and Meaning of this Tradition in the Councils of *Lateran* and *Trent*? If it be said *that the Sense and Meaning of this Tradition as there expressed (viz. Transubstantiation) was always deliver'd from Father*

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ther to Son: I answer, 1. This is more than is pretended by many of the greatest Men in the Roman Church, as hath been lately abundantly shewed. And it is impossible to make it out that the manner of the Presence, hath been constantly delivered from Father to Son from the time of Christ and his Apostles; for the main Testimonies alledged out of Antiquity are onely for a Real Presence; and there are as expreis Testimonies against the Change of the Elements, as there are any for the other. 2. This takes off from the Power and Authority of the Church of *Rome* if it cannot make a necessary Explication of the Sense and Meaning of Tradition, and resolves all into a meer humane Faith; which is the unavoidable Consequence of this Doctrine of Oral Tradition. For no other Account can be given of it than from meer Natural Reason, viz. *that Traditionary Christians could not believe otherwise to day than they did yesterday*. Granting this to be true (which is very far from being so, as shall be shewed, when Your Answer to the Instance of the *Greek Church* comes abroad) yet the utmost this can amount to is, that I resolve my Faith into a Logical Demonstration. And is this *the Faith* Christians are to be saved by? What *Grace of God*, what *Assistance of the Holy Spirit* are necessary to such a Faith as this? But for this, I refer you to the *Hæresis Blackläna, &c.*

2. I intended by the second Question to put a Difference between the Tradition allowed by us, and the Tradition disputed. If no more were meant by Tradition than the Universal Tradition of the Christian Church as to the Books of Scripture; this I had before granted to be a sufficient Ground for the Certainty of our Faith as to the Canon of Scripture, which is our Rule of Faith; but if by Tradition be understood

stood, either some necessary Articles of Faith not contained in Scripture, or a Power in the Church to make unnecessary to become necessary; this I denyed and desire to see some better Proof of it than you produce.

All the Answer which you give in your own Paper to these two Questions, is, *that All Traditionary Christians, that is all Bishops, all Priests, all Fathers and all People following this Rule, and receiving Faith because it was received the day before could not innovate in Faith, unless they could all either forget what they received the day before, or out of Malice change it, therefore because no cause can be assigned for such an effect, they cannot innovate; If there can? Assign it.*

Now to which of the Questions that I put is this an Answer? Doth this shew that the Church of Rome is Infallible in giving the Sense and Meaning of Tradition? or that this Tradition is a Rule of Faith distinct from Scripture? But it seems to be an Answer to the Question in your Copy; and therefore it is very suspicious, that the Question was so framed, that the Answer might seem pertinent to it.

To shew the vanity of this Demonstration, I produced the Instance of the *Greek Church* which followed Tradition from Father to Son, and yet you charge it with Errour in matters of Faith, so that a Church following Tradition may err in matters of Faith.

Here again your Copy notoriously fails, for it makes me put such another wise Question as before.

Whether the Greek Church did follow from Father to Son the Tradition in matters of Faith or no?

As though I had desired Information from you, whether it did, yea, or no? And that had been all. But I urged plainly that it did, and notwithstanding you charge it with Errour (nay with Heresie;) which overthrows all the force of your Demonstration, that a Church

Church following Tradition cannot err, when you charge a Church following Tradition with Heresie.

And is not this some thing like falsification, to leave out the whole force and strength of an Argument? And to leave it a very insipid toothless Question?

No, saith Mr. M. p. 18. *it was onely to spare a little unnecessary Pains; for it cannot be imagined he should have any other design in leaving out those words.*

I do not charge the Gentleman who wrote with a design to falsify, but I cannot excuse you from dispersing false Copies, in that when you could not but see the Notorious Defects of this Copy, you would disperse it as containing a true Account of the Conference. Methinks you were very sparing in the necessary pains of Correcting it, before you had read it in companies for the true Copy and given it to others to transcribe.

As to the Conclusion Mr. M. confesses *that it was not distinctly set down*; but I say again, that Copy is false in the Conclusion. For these are the Words,

[The Greek Church followed Tradition from Father to Son] *till they left that Rule and took up another and so fell into Errour as the Calvinists did.*

Here is not one Word concerning the *Arians*, which you cannot but remember that you ran to and mentioned over and over, when I told you the *Greek Church* did still follow Tradition as her Rule; you said *the Arians left the Rule and interpreted Scripture as the Calvinists did.* I told you again that I meant not the *Arians*, but the *present Greek Church*; and I do particularly remember that I desired the Gentleman who wrote for you to put down in his Paper that it was *the present Greek Church* I spake of.

I grant

I grant as Mr. M. saith p. 19. *that it was not set down by your Consent any where; for the Truth is, when you found your self pinched by this Instance, you grew so very uneasie, that you did all you could to bring things into that Confusion and Disorder, which Mr. M. mentions. You rose up in a great heat, and talked a great deal to no purpose about Calvinists; &c. for, all the ways I could use could not bring you to set down any farther Answer to the pressing Instance of the Greek Church. You confessed, I had raised a vast Difficulty about it; but after all, you left no Answer behind you to this Difficulty, and I still desire you to give it.*

Mr. M. p. 19. *doth ingenuously confess that this Point was not fully cleared.* No, not in any measure. But he saith, *I began with Reproaches.* I confess it is a terrible Reproach to tell a Man, he cannot Answer an Argument: but that he makes use of Tricks to avoid it; and that I never met with any that excelled you in that kind. Farther than this, I remember not that I used any term of Reproach to you. And the onely way to wipe off such a Reproach is to give a fair and Ingenuous Answer; and till that be done, this Reproach will stick.

As to Mr. T's slip in calling the Greek Church an *universal Church*, methinks you might excuse him for the sake of the Roman Catholick Church; which in other words is the *Roman universal Church*. And why should not such a Contradiction doe as well in Greek as Latin; since the Patriarch of Constantinople had the Title of *Oecumenical Patriarch*?

But this Gentleman cannot escape so; for although Mr. M. cannot deny, *that at the End of the first Dispute* i.e. *declared that he was fully satisfied with my Answers; (p. 10.) yet he desires leave to judge how far this*

this satisfaction of Mr. T. was rational and what grounds he had for it. If Mr. T. had been unsatisfied with my Answers, no doubt he had passed for a Rational and Ingenious Man; but his Misfortune is, that he could not see Reason in your Demonstrations; nor the want of it in what I offer'd to prove the Certainty of our Faith, without your pretence to Infallibility.

Therefore to satisfy the World that Mr. T. had sufficient Grounds for what he then said, I shall now examine and weigh all the Parts of that Conference, and consider what Mr. M. hath said about it.

The occasion of it is thus set down by him (p. 2.) *You had affirmed in some Companies that no Protestant could shew any Ground of Absolute Certainty for their Faith; and that Mr. T. had promised you that if I were not able to manifest the contrary he would forsake our Communion.*

Hitherto Mr. T. was a very rational Man, because he appeared to doubt of his Religion; and if a little thing had satisfied him; i. e. if he had been converted by your Demonstration, he had been more so than ever. But if a Man cannot be convinced by your reason to change his Religion, who can help it? And yet I very much question whether F. W. would absolve any Man who professed to embrace the *Catholic Faith* on your Grounds; which overthrow the Churches Authority in matters of Faith, and proceed upon *Pelagian Principles*.

The first thing which was proposed, saith Mr. M. (p. 3.) and indeed the only Subject Mr. G. had any purpose to discourse on was, Whether Protestants had a Ground of Absolute Certainty for their Faith, or not? Here the Faith spoken of, is that Faith whereby we are Christians, and your pretence was that without your Infalli-

bility we can have no Absolute Certainty of the Christian Faith, *i. e.* of the Grounds on which we believe the Scripture to contain the Word of God; or all things necessary to be believ'd by us in order to Salvation.

Therefore when the Question was put by you:

Q. 1. Whether you are absolutely certain that you hold now the same Tenets in Faith, and all that our Saviour taught to his Apostles?

A. 1. My Answer was, that we are absolutely certain that we now hold all the same Doctrine that was taught by Christ and his Apostles.

Wherein I plainly distinguish between that Doctrine which Christ by his own Mouth taught his Apostles, and that which the Apostles did by the Spirit of Christ teach the whole Church. The Account I offer'd as to the Christian Faith, was not, as to what Christ taught by an Oral Tradition (as the *Jews* affirm of *Moses* delivering an unwritten Law) but I framed my Answer on purpose, to shew that our Faith is not to be resolved into what Christ taught any otherwise than as it is conveyed to us by the Writings of the Apostles and Evangelists. For the Resolution of our Faith, as to what Christ himself taught, is not to be made into the Words of Christ teaching, conveyed by an Oral Tradition from his time downwards, but into the Words of Christ as recorded by the holy Writers of the New Testament. And so much I expressed in Answer to the next Question.

Q. 2. By what certain Rule do you hold it?

A. 2. By the Divine Revelations contained in the Writings of the New Testament.

Here was no Subtilty or Learning requisite, but to give a plain Answer, as to the Rule of our Faith. Which

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we do assert to be the Written Word, and no Oral Tradition.

Q 3. Then follow'd, *By what certain Rule do you know that the New Testament, which we now have does contain all the Divine Revelations of Christ and his Apostles?*

A. 3. *By the Universal Testimony of the Christian Church from the Apostles time downwards.*

In which Answer, I laid down the Grounds of our different Resolution of Faith from that which you contend for; and which I at large explained in the Conference it self; viz. that our Certainty of Faith is chiefly resolved into the Testimony of the Apostolical Churches, which first received the Books of the New Testament from the Divine Writers of them; and from these Churches where the Authentick Writings themselves were preserved, Copies were dispersed over other Churches, which by comparing together the Testimonies of the several Churches, did by degrees fix upon the Certain Canon of the New Testament.

Here a Question was started, *Whether all the Books of the New Testament were alike received?*

I answer'd, not at first, but after due Examination those which were at first Controverted, came to be universally received. And I particularly instanced in the *Church of Rome*; which a long time did not receive the *Epistle* to the *Hebrews*, when it was received by other Churches; but at last did yield to the Testimony of other Churches therein. From whence I observed, that the *Church of Rome* was far from being believed then to have the Authority of making the Canon of Scripture, or being Infallible in Faith, it being then taxed for disbelieving a Part of Scripture, and being at last over-ruled by the Testimony of the other Apostolical Churches.

I remember I asked you how it came about that the Church of *Rome* in *St Jerom's* time did err about the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, if there were any Infallibility in it?

And your Answer was, *that Rome was at a great distance from Judea*: Which I thought a strange Answer, considering the Communication the Churches then had at greater distance, and the frequent Recourse of *Jews to Rome*; but especially if that Church had any Promise of Infallibility made to it. Which, to be just to you, I do not remember that you once asserted, in all that two hours Discourse. And truly you were not inconsistent with your Principles therein: For Infallibility by Promise and by Oral Tradition are as different as Grace and Nature, or the Assent of Faith from a Dictate of Reason. In Faith a Divine Testimony is supposed; in the Infallibility of Oral Tradition nothing but a Natural Principle, *that men must hold the same Doctrine to day that they did yesterday, and so up to the time of our Blessed Saviour.*

Where the different method of our resolving Faith appears; you begin at the present time, and so run upwards, but the force of all lies in the connexion of one link with another inseparably; which, I say, will by no means hold; but ours begins with the Apostolical Churches which first received the sacred Books, and delivered them down; their Testimony is the Authentick instrument of conveying down the Canon of Scripture, and the following Tradition of the Church is onely a conveying down that first Testimony upon which we believe the Canon of the New Testament. There were many interlocutory passages about this Subject; but this is the substance of what I distinctly remember.

Q. 4. Was

Q. 4. Was that Universal Testimony an Infalible Rule to assure us certainly down to our time that the New Testament contained all the Divine Revelations of Christ and his Apostles?

A. 4. The Universal Testimony of the Christian Church concerning the Book of Scripture, and the Doctrine contained therein is a sufficient Ground to make us certain of all matters necessary to our Salvation.

To make this Answer clear, we are to consider that the Scripture being our sole and entire Rule of Faith, all matters necessary to Salvation must be supposed to be contained therein; and therefore the same Testimony which delivers the Scripture to us, doth deliver all the necessary Articles of Faith as contained therein. Which are there received as in the Lump; and if we receive the Book which contains all, we must by the same Authority receive all contained in it. As if a Purse be left to a Man by his Father's Will, full of Gold and Silver, and this by the Executours be declared to contain all the Gold and Silver his Father left him; they who deliver this Purse to him from the Executours, do certainly deliver to him all the Gold and Silver left him by his Father. But if he suspects there was both Gold and Silver left him by his Father which was not in that Purse, then he must call in question the Integrity of the Executours who declared that all was contained therein. This is now the Case of the Christian Church as to all Divine Truths which respect Mens Salvation; the Primitive Church, who answer to the Executours in the other Case, did unanimously declare that all such Truths were undoubtedly contained in the Written Word. Although therefore there may be a real difference in the nature of the Doctrines therein

therein contained, as there is between Gold and Silver, yet he that receives all must receive the one as well as the other; and the matters of Salvation being of greatest moment, they that receive the whole Will of God upon grounds of certainty must be assured that therein they receive all matters necessary to our Salvation.

Against my Answer to this Question Mr. *M.* suggests several things; (p. 12.)

(1.) *As to difference of Translations.* Doth Mr. *M.* think our Faith is to be resolved into the Original Texts? What becomes then of the *Vulgar Latin*? For although the Council of *Trent* declares it to be *Authentick*, yet I take it to be but a *Translation*. But there is a difference of *Translations*, and there is no unanimous consent of the *Christian Church* for any one. And how is it possible there should be since the *Christian Church* consists of so many bodies of Men of different Countries and Languages? But we have the unanimous Consent of all the ancient *Christian Churches* for the Translation of the Scripture into their own Languages; which shews that they thought the People ought to be acquainted with it as the Word of God so translated; and that they were to resolve their Faith into it, as they were capable of understanding it. And it is very hard to conceive how Faith can be resolved into an unknown Tongue; but we have the unanimous consent of the *Christian Church* that Faith must rest upon the Word of God which is contained in the Books of Scripture. And therefore we have the Consent of the *Christian Church* against resolving Faith into the Infallibility of Oral Tradition. For if this were the *Christian Method* of Resolving Faith, there would have been very little Use or Necessity of Scripture; and the Fathers

thers were extremely mistaken in the mighty Characters which on all Occasions they give of it; not onely of the excellency of the matter contained in it, but as a Rule of Faith for all Christians; as I might easily shew if there were occasion. But I desire to see any thing like the consent of the Christian Church from the Apostles times downwards for resolving Faith into mere *Oral Tradition*; and certainly if the Church had used this way, it must have understood it and expressed it. And it is a just Prescription against a method of resolving Faith, that the ancient Christian Church, which consisted (I hope) of true believers, never knew any thing concerning it; and yet, I suppose, they had *absolute Certainty of their Faith*; though they had *different Translations* of the Bible among them.

(2.) *As to the Number of Books.* I do not deny that there was in the first Ages a difference in several Churches about the Number of Canonical Books; but this doth not hinder that *Universal Testimony* I mentioned; For (1.) It adds weight to the Churches Testimony that where there was any Controversie about any Canonical Book of the New Testament, the matter was examined and debated, and at last after a through discussion the Book was received, as happened about the *Epistle to the Hebrews*. Which was not received by the Authority of one Church imposing upon another, but by a fair Examination of Evidence produced for its Apostolical authority: which being allow'd, it hath been received by the unanimous Consent of the Christian Church. (2.) There hath been ever since an uncontradicted Consent of the Christian Church as to the Canonical Books of the New Testament. No one Church disputing the Authority of any of them. And even

even the Council of *Trent* agrees with us herein; although it endeavours to obtrude some Books for Canonical in the old Testament, which never had the Universal Consent of the Jewish or Christian Church for them.

(3.) *He desires to know, how I understand that all the Divine Revelations are contained in the New Testament, viz. whether all necessary Articles of Faith are contained in the New Testament virtually and implicitly, or clearly and explicitly; the former will doe me little service, the latter is contradicted by the Church of Rome, and therefore I can plead no Universal Testimony of the Christian Church; and so my Plea for absolute Certainty is groundless.*

To this I answer,

(1.) If it be agreed that all Doctrines of Faith necessary to Salvation are contained in Scripture either *explicitly or implicitly* (which Mr. *M.* denies not) it is sufficient for my purpose. For the Ground of my Faith is absolutely Certain, *viz.* that all necessary Articles of Faith are contained in Scripture; and if they be *explicit*, I am bound to give a distinct Assent to them; if they be not, then no more is required of me than to believe them, when they do appear to be there; which is no more than a general preparation of Mind to yield my assent to whatsoever doth appear to me to be the Word of God. So that my Faith rests on the Word of God as its absolute ground of Certainty; but the particular Certainty as to this or that Doctrine depends upon the Evidence that it is contained in Scripture. And it is the *general Ground of Faith* we are now upon, and not the *particular Acts of it.*

(2.) The

(2.) The Church of *Rome* assuming to it self the Power of making *implicit Articles* to become *explicit* by its declaring the sense of them, doth not overthrow the Certainty of our Faith. For as long as it is granted that all necessary Articles of Faith are there *explicitly* or *implicitly* by an Universal Consent of the Christian Church, it signifies nothing to the shaking of my Faith that a particular Part of the Church doth assume such a Power to it self. For this must come among the particular Points of Faith, and not the general Grounds: It must be looked on as an Article of Faith, and so it must be contained in Scripture either *explicitly* or *implicitly*. If *explicitly*, we desire to see it in express terms, which I suppose you will not pretend to; if only *implicitly*, I pray tell me how I can be explicitly bound to believe such a Power in the Church of *Rome*, which is only implicitly there? And by what Power this *implicit* Article comes to be made *explicit*? For the Power of the Church it self being the Article in question, it is impossible that while it is only *implicitly* there, it should make it self *Explicit*. If it be said, *that it will become explicit to any sober Enquirer*; then every such Person may without the Churches help find out all Necessary Points of Faith; which is a Doctrine I am so far from being ashamed of, that I think it most agreeable to the Goodness of God, the Nature of the Christian Faith, and the Unanimous Consent of the Christian Church for many Ages. But this is beyond our present business.

(3.) The Church of *Rome* hath no-where declared in Council, that it hath any such Power of making *implicit Articles* of Faith contained in Scripture to become *explicit* by its explaining the Sense of them. For the Church of *Rome* doth not pretend to make new *Articles of Faith*; but to make an *implicit* Doctrine to be-

come *explicit*, is really to make a new Article of Faith. It doth not indeed make a *new Divine Revelation*; but it makes that which was not necessary to be believed, to become necessary; and what is not necessary to be believed, is no *Article of Faith*. What is only believed *implicitly* is not *actually* believed; but there is only a preparation of mind to believe it, supposing it to be made appear to be a matter of Faith. Besides, the Church of *Rome* declares that it receives its Doctrines by *Tradition*; and although I have often heard of an *implicit Faith*, I know not what to make of an *implicit Tradition*. I had thought whatever is delivered by way of *Tradition* must be *explicit*; or else *the Father and Son might easily be mistaken*: And so for all that I can see Mr. M. and you must dispute it out; for you say, *That the Infallibility of Faith depends on Oral Tradition, and the Infallibility of Oral Tradition on this, that the Traditionary Christians hold the same Doctrine to day that was delivered yesterday in Faith, and so up to the time of our B. Saviour*. But what think you now of Mr. M.'s assertion, *That the Church hath power to interpret and make known implicit Doctrines contained in Scripture, so as to make it necessary to believe them explicitly*? For he saith, *That all the Churches in Communion with Rome do hold there are Divine Revelations in Scripture, which are contained there virtually and implicitly, so as they need the Churches Interpretation and Authority for being made known to us*. Let us now lay these two assertions together. If your Doctrine hold good, *All Doctrines of Faith must be explicitly delivered from Father to Son*; No, saith Mr. M. *The Church hath power to make known Doctrines implicitly and virtually contained in Scripture*. I pray could the Father communicate to his Son what was only *implicitly and virtually* contained in Scripture? If Mr. M. say true, here

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is a very possible cause of Innovation assigned *without Forgetfulness or Malice* ; viz. when the Fathers of the Church take upon them to draw forth implicit Doctrines, and to make them explicit Articles of Faith. And thus undoubtedly many Innovations have come into the Church ; when some persons have taken up a particular Opinion, and because nothing would prevail without Scripture, they have attempted to bring it out of Scripture ; but that being not plain or clear for it, they gave out it was *virtually and implicitly* contained in it ; and thus it passed from one to another, till it getting footing in the Church, and prevailing over a great part of it ; then, lest the Church should be charged with Errour and Innovation, the prevailing Party takes upon it to declare this to be *the sense and meaning of Scripture*, and to require all persons of their Communion to believe it. And thus Mr. M. hath answered your Demonstration. But still, although the Church of *Rome* hath assumed such a Power, yet it still disowned it, and even in the Council of *Trent* pretended to interpret Scripture according to the *unanimous sense of the Fathers* ; which is directly contrary to the Power of making known such a *sense and meaning of Scripture* in Doctrines of Faith, as may oblige men to believe that *explicitly* now, which they were not obliged to, by any precedent Sense or Explanation.

I come now to the Fifth and Last Question.

Qu. 5. Being the words Christian Church may be taken in several latitudes by persons of different Religions, I desire to know what that Christian Church is, whose Testimony concerning the Books of Scripture, and the Doctrine contained therein, is a sufficient ground to make us certain of all matters that are necessary to our Salvation ?

Ans. 5. By the Universal Testimony of the Christian Church concerning the Books of Scripture which are our Rule of Faith as to matters of Salvation, I mean, the Universal Consent of all Christian Churches from the Apostles times downwards.

This Mr. *M.* calls *Trifling*, (p. 13.) and in this you agree, though you differ in the Resolution of Faith. But I pray wherein does this *Trifling* lie? Was it because I would not answer as you would have had me? But I do not yet see how I could have answered more to the purpose. The Question in short was, What the Christian Church was, whose Universal Testimony I relied upon as to the Canon of Scripture? My Answer was, That the Christian Church is that which is made up of all Christian Churches; and their Universal Consent is that Testimony we rely upon. Is this *Trifling*?

But, saith Mr. *M.* (p. 14.) *Mr. G.'s intention was to know what Churches I accounted Christian Churches.* I told you over and over, since we were enquiring into the general Grounds of Faith, if we had the Universal Testimony of all Christian Churches, I had no reason to go any farther. For, if all Churches of the Christian World be agreed, as they are, about the Canon of the New Testament, this was sufficient for the certainty of our Faith, without looking after any Infallibility in the Church of *Rome*. And this, you know, was the main Point in Dispute between us; as appears by the occasion of it, as it is set down by Mr. *M.* You affirmed, that no Protestant could shew any ground of absolute certainty for their Faith: I undertook to shew we had; for our Faith is resolved into the Scripture as the Word of God; and whatever is built on the Word of God is absolutely certain: And that these Books of the New Testament contain our Rule of Faith as being the Word of God, we have.

have the Universal Testimony of all Christian Churches. And this makes our Faith as to these Books absolutely certain. And where now is the *Trifling*? Doth the Universal Testimony of all Christian Churches afford sufficient Ground of Certainty as to the Books of Scripture or not? If not, why do you not shew wherein it fails? If it doth, what mean you to call this *Trifling*? When it is apparent I have gained the Point I aimed at, *viz. That we Protestants have certain Grounds for our Faith, without any need of the Roman Churches Infallibility.* Which was the thing to be shewed.

But Mr. *M.* tells me (p. 14.) *That you asked me whether I included the Arians, Nestorians, Eutychians and Calvinists, and urged that this Question might be written down; to which I did not consent: Because Mr. T. declared he was fully satisfied and desired to propose a New Question to Mr. G.*

I grant you did ask me the Question several times, whether I included the *Arians, Nestorians, &c.* I told you I rejected the Doctrines of all such as were condemned by the four General Councils, as the *Arians, Nestorians* and *Eutychians* were; but it was not pertinent to our purpose to consider, how far any under those Denominations might be Parts of the Catholic Church. For since we had the Consent of all Christian Churches in this Matter, I had no Reason to lessen the Evidence they gave by a Concurrent Testimony. For the Argument was so much stronger, since all Churches, under all Denominations did agree in it.

But Mr. *M.* still complains, that I would not permit your sixth Question, *viz. What Churches I look'd on as Members of the Christian Church?* It is strange he should forget for what Reason I rejected it, *viz. because it was not pertinent to our business.* For, if the

the Testimony of all Christian Churches be more considerable than only of some, why should I lessen the strength of the Argument taken from the Universal Consent of all Christian Churches? The other Question must have led us into other Disputes foreign to our business; and my design was to keep close to *the Matter of Certainty*; about which the Conference began.

And now I hope I have given an Answer to the Letter *desiring Information of the Conference*; which I did forbear in my first Letter to set down at large, foreseeing that either your self or your friend would offer me farther occasion, to give a fuller account of it.

But because the Substance of the whole Conference depended on those two Points,

1. Whether the Universal Consent of all Christian Churches be not a sufficient Ground for our Certainty as to our Rule of Faith, *viz.* the Scripture?

2. Whether Tradition from Father to Son, be an infallible Conveyance of Matters of Faith?

To shew, wherein the main force of the whole Conference lay in few words, I desired you to make good these two Things;

1. That we have no absolute Certainty as to the Rule of our Faith, *viz.* the Scripture; although we have a larger and firmer Tradition for it, *viz.* the Consent of all Christian Churches, than you can have for the Points in Difference between us.

2. That the Tradition from Father to Son, is an infallible Conveyance in Matters of Faith, notwithstanding the *Greek Church* is charged by you with Error, which adhered to Tradition.

Now upon this, the Authour of the first Letter desires to be commended to me as a Man who loves to spare his own Pains. For 'tis as much as to say, do you doe all the Work, and I will sit by and tell you whether it be well

well done or no, must Mr. G. prove that Protestants have no absolute Certainty?

I think you are bound to do it, upon Mr. M's own Account of the Occasion of the Conference, *viz. that you affirmed that no Protestants could shew any Ground of Certainty for their Faith.* And upon this the Conference was desired; and since therein, I undertake to shew what our Ground of Certainty was, you ought to make it evident wherein it fails; and you have not so much as offer'd at any thing to disprove it, but would fairly have run into another dispute; and because I would not yield to it, you and Mr. M. call me a *Trifler*. You see I have not been *so sparing of my Pains* now; but I would commend that Gentleman to you, who get other Men to do your Work for you.

But he goes on, *I thought it had concerned them to be satisfied that they have.* Yes, so we are; and are very well satisfied that we stand upon surer Grounds, than those who go upon the baffled pretence of the Infallibility of *Oral Tradition*; for which no one Church of the Christian World hath declared.

For the *Infallibility of Tradition* in the Church of Rome is another thing, depending upon a Divine Promise and not a kind of meer natural Infallibility. But he saith, *he takes no notice that the Question is veered from certainty of Protestant Doctrine to certainty of Scripture.* How strangely mistaken is this Gentleman in the whole Matter! For the Question was wholly about the *certainty of Faith* in general; as fully appears by what is said already. When the Grounds of Faith are made clear, we shall come easier to particular Points of Difference between us. If we may have sufficient certainty without your pretence of Infallibility, then we may have a true and sound Faith without coming into your Church; and where there is such a Faith,

Faith there is a Possibility of Salvation, and consequently there can be no Necessity of Forsaking the Communion of a Church, where we have such certain Grounds of Faith.

Mr. *M.* in Answer to the first Particular speaks more home and close to the purpose, and therefore what he saith deserves to be more strictly examined.

(1.) *It is not denied*, saith he (p. 28.) *that there is in Faith an absolute certainty for that Scripture wherein we agree.* Thus far Mr. *M.* grants what you deny, *that we Protestants have absolute certainty for our Faith.* But he will not allow us to be able to *shew any such certainty on our Principles.* Now this is truly a hard case we are in; there is an absolute Certainty, and this certainty lies in Universal Tradition; and we can shew this Universal Tradition, and yet we cannot shew the true Ground of our certainty. If this be our case, we deserve to be either pitied or begg'd.

But surely Mr. *M.* hath some colour for such a strange Assertion. This is all he pretends for it; *that in the time of the Reformation, the Protestants charged all Christian Churches with Errours, not only in other Articles of their Belief, but even in the Tradition or Delivery of Scripture.* Therefore we can have no certainty now from the Universal Tradition of Christian Churches. Suppose some Men were then to blame in charging some Churches with more Errours than they were guilty of; must therefore no Argument be taken from their consent when things are more cleared and better understood? This is just as if it had been said of the blind Man whom our Saviour cured, *You saw Men walking like Trees* at first, and therefore you have no right to judge them to be otherwise now. Or like one newly escaped out of a dark Prison, who fears and suspects every one he meets and takes all for Enemies, till

till he be better acquainted with them; must this man therefore never have any certain knowledge afterwards of Friends and Enemies? But why doth not Mr. *M.* name *the Churches which the Reformers charged with Errours in delivering the Canon of Scripture*? I am sure they plead the consent of the Eastern Churches against the *Tridentine Canon*, as to the Old Testament; and all Christian Churches are known to agree as to the New, and why such an *universal consent* should not afford a *ground of certainty* to us, is beyond my understanding.

(2.) He saith, *Our Rule is Scripture, not as interpreted (or to be interpreted) by the Church, but as understood (or to be understood, without a necessity of submitting to the Interpretation of the Church) by every sober Enquirer, tho' of the meanest capacity; for which Rule we are far from having the consent of all Christian Churches.* The main Question is, Whether Scripture be a *Rule of Faith* to us, or not? And certainly all that believe it to be the *Word of God* must take it for a *Rule of Faith*. For, since the reason of our believing is because God hath revealed, whatever God hath revealed must be believed; and a Book containing in it such Revelations must be the Rule of our Faith; *i. e.* by it we are to judge what we are bound to believe as Divine Revelations. The best of your Divines do all agree, that our Faith is not to be resolved into any other Revelation than that which was made by Christ and his Apostles; and that this Revelation is contained in the Books of the New Testament. This being agreed on both sides, every Christian, how mean soever his capacity be, must look on the Scripture as his Rule of Faith; for he that is bound to believe at all, must have some Rule, or else he may believe any thing; he finds all persons agreed that the Scripture is the Word of God; and God's Word is an infallible Rule: therefore he is bound to search the Scripture for the matters of

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Faith.

Faith. And is it possible to imagine that God himself should direct the making of this Rule for the benefit of all who are bound to believe, and not to make it useful to its End, *viz.* to be able to direct them in the necessary Points of Salvation? The Founders of Monastic Orders made Rules for all those who were to live in them, and obliged them to observe them, under pain of Ex-pulsion: I desire to know, whether this doth not suppose that those Rules are capable of being understood by all persons admitted into those Orders, so far as they are concerned; and whether the Penalty would be reasonable, in case they could not understand their duty by them? But in our case the matter is of far greater moment; for mens Eternal Salvation or Misery depends upon *knowing and doing the will of God* contained in Scripture; and therefore it is of so much greater consequence and necessity that all persons who are concerned for their Salvation should be able to understand by diligent and carefull reading the Scripture so much as is required of them in order to it. And this was the certain Faith of the Primitive Church, *that all things necessary to Salvation were plain in Scripture*; and if they were plain, they needed no Interpreter.

But we have not the consent of all Christian Churches that the Scripture is a Rule of Faith without the Churches Interpretation. I answer, that we have the consent of all Christian Churches that the Scripture is a *Rule of Faith*; but, whether besides this Rule, there be an *Infallible Judge of Controversies*, or *Interpreter of Scripture*, is another distinct Controversie. We have the unanimous consent of all Christian Churches for the one; but in the present state of Christendom we do not pretend it for the other: for we are well enough acquainted with the pretence of *Infallibility in the Church of Rome*; but then we say that it is impossible for you to bring

bring such an unanimous consent of all Christian Churches for your *Infallible Judge*, as we do bring for our *Rule of Faith*; and therefore we have much greater certainty of our *Rule*, than you can have of your *Infallible Judge*. We appeal to *all the Churches* of the *Christian World* for our *Rule*; you dare not appeal to *any one Church* besides your own for your *Infallibility*: For, it is utterly denied by all the *Eastern Churches*, though of very different denominations. And when you bring an universal consent of all Christian Churches for the *Roman Churches Infallibility*, I may safely promise to become your Convert.

But yet they do not agree that everyman is to interpret Scripture for himself. What is the meaning of *interpreting Scripture for himself*? If it be, that a man is to rely on Scripture as his *Rule of Faith* in order to *Salvation*, then we have their universal consent, in as much as they deliver this as the *Rule of Faith*. If it be, that in doubtfull places he is to rely on his own Judgment, without making use of the best helps, then we pretend to no such thing; for we assert the contrary, and do think in all doubtfull cases that persons are bound to make use of the best and most reasonable means for their satisfaction; among which we not only reckon *Prayer, Meditation, comparing Scripture and Expositors upon it, but the help of Spiritual Guides, and the Sense of the Primitive Church*; which our Church doth especially recommend, and which we look on as the best Arbitrator between us in all our Controversies about the sense of doubtfull places of Scripture.

But after all, either there must be an *Infallible Judge*, or every man must judge for himself in all matters that concern his *Salvation*. And therefore, if we have the consent of all Christian Churches, against the only pretended *Infallible Judge*, we have their consent likewise, that every man is to judge for his own *Salvation*. And this

all Mankind are really agreed in, whatever some may Pretend; or else it is to no purpose for you to go about to make Converts; for, in so doing, you make the person you intend to convert Judge of the best way to Salvation; and not only so, but you make him Judge of all the Controversies between Us and You, and especially of the *true grounds of Faith*. And how ridiculous after this is it to pretend that a man is not to judge for himself in matters that concern his Salvation?

(3.) Lastly, Mr. M. (p. 29.) *desires to know what those Christian Churches are, whose Testimony is required towards the assuring us, what is Scripture and what not, and by what mark I distinguished them from others?* I answer again, by no other mark than that they are *Christian Churches*; and it is a great satisfaction to any mans mind, that however they differ about other matters, yet they are all agreed in the Canon of the New Testament. I am by no means bound *to assign any Rule in this case*, as you desire, *whereby to distinguish Orthodox Churches from Heretical*; for, whatever they are in other points, they all agree in this, which is the Foundation of our Faith.

As to the 2d. Point I proposed in my Letter to be made good, *viz. That the Tradition from Father to Son is an infallible conveyance of matters of Faith, notwithstanding the Greek Church is charged by you with Errours, which adhered to Tradition*; the Author of the first Letter thinks *you are concerned to answer it*. But then he thinks *I am as well bound to answer your Argument*. In good time! But was not that very instance of the *Greek Church* produced on purpose to shew the weakness of the Argument? And is not making that plain, answering it as effectually, as the Philosopher's Argument against Motion was, when the man moved before him? For he proved that impossible, which he shewed was so far from it, that he saw him doe it. And Sophistical Arguments are best answered by clear and undeniable Instances:

stances: and this of the *Greek Church* is of that nature.

But he saith, *Objections may be raised against the most undeniable Truth*; and he instanceth in *two things mathematically demonstrable*; and yet *Objections may be made against them, which cannot easily be answered*. But the difference of the case is very plain; for those instances only shew, that there are some things above our comprehension about Matter and Motion; but what is this to an infallible Rule of Faith; which every one is bound to know, if (according to you) he would have any certainty of his Faith? And if it appears by a notorious instance that it fails, (for a whole Church and a very great and ancient Church is accused by you of no less than Heresie, and yet it adhered to Tradition) then the Demonstration is quite gone. But Mr. *M.* saith (p. 29.) *That you never acknowledged that the Greek Church erred while it adhered to Tradition; and therefore my supposing it is to beg the Question, and mis-represent the state of the Argument*. But whether you acknowledged it or not, the *Greek Church* did adhere to *Tradition*, when the *Latin Church* charged it with Heresie. And certainly I may be allowed to argue from an undeniable instance as I shall believe it to be, till I see the Answer to it which Mr. *M.* promises in his Conclusion:

Before he comes to that, he lets me know (p. 31.) *that himself and several others, upon comparing my two Propositions together, had found a contradiction in them, and so they had once more Dr. St. against Dr. St.* This is as witty an observation as the Author of *Pax vobis* had made upon me; who, because I had proved from *St. Paul's* words that *Jupiter* was sometimes taken among the Heathens for the true God, from thence wisely infers, *that I am for introducing Paganism, and hardly believe another Life*; but this is so gross and ridiculous a calumny, that it hardly deserves to be taken notice of. But I pray let me see this *Controversie-juggle*, as Mr. *M.* phrases it; and

and how Dr. St. is set up against Dr. St. Thus it lies : *In my first Proposition I seem to affirm that the Tradition of all Christian Churches is a ground of absolute certainty for the admittance of Scripture ; and in the second I would infer that Tradition is no infallible conveyance of matters of Faith ; but the belief of the Scripture is a matter of Faith.* A rare Discovery ! Methinks, Mr. G. appears very well qualified to set up for a Controvertist, and much such a one as those who formerly set Dr. St. against Dr. St. But the Author of the first Letter observes, *that I spare my own pains, and put the proof upon you ; & Mr. M. confesses, that the occasion of the Conference was, that you affirmed that Protestants could not shew any ground of absolute certainty for their Faith.* Therefore, since you own *Tradition* to be an infallible way of conveying Faith, I desired to know how you could deny that we had any ground for *absolute certainty* of our Faith as to the Word of God, when the *Tradition* we go upon is so much larger and firmer than any you can bring for the points of Faith in difference between us. But then as to your way of explaining Tradition not with respect to the *Books of Scripture*, but to *particular Doctrines of Faith*, I proposed the second particular to you to make good, *viz.* That the Tradition from Father to Son is an infallible conveyance of matters of Faith, notwithstanding the *Greek Church* is charged by you with Error which adhered to Tradition.

If therefore you do own the Infallibility of Tradition you have no reason to deny that we have *any ground of certainty*, who have a more unquestionable Tradition for the Scriptures, than you can have for your distinguishing Doctrines, or the matters of Controversie between us. Yet, how can you esteem your way of *Tradition* an infallible conveyance of matters of Faith, when you charge the *Greek Church* with Heresie, which adhered to Tradition ?

Thus

Thus I leave any Reader to judge, where the appearance of a contradiction lies.

There remains nothing more in either of the Letters which I can think requires an Answer; unless it be that I charge Mr. *M.* with *using arts to get Mr. T. to sign your Copy.* I do confess that when he told me Mr. *M.* had spoken to him that they might meet and compare and sign each others Copies, without acquainting me with it, or desiring that Copy which was taken for me, (and was read aloud till the Company rose) and *that he had said that I gave out false Copies,* I did look upon these as *Arts*; but if he doth not like this name (nor Mr. *T.*) I can soon find out another. And the matter of fact is owned by Mr. *M.* in these words: *Meeting accidentally with Mr. T. in the street, I told him I heard you complained that Mr. G.'s Papers of the Conference were false, and therefore I desired him to compare his copy with that which was written for Mr. G. that we might see whether Mr. G. or his Amanuensis had dealt fairly or not.* Here is the very thing confessed which I complained of, *viz.* that, without acquainting me with it, he would have had Mr. *T.* to have compared his Copy with theirs, after he confesses I had complained that the Copy they gave out was false. And if Mr. *T.* had complied with this Proposition, and after comparing had signed your Copy, what Triumphs had then been made, that Mr. *T.* himself had owned your Copy against me! And for this matter I need not make *any insinuation*, for the thing itself is clear. The only way for your justification had been, when you heard of my complaint, to have brought or sent your Copy to me to have examined and compared it; but I say still, it was very unjustifiable for you to give out a Copy for the true account of the Conference, which was never read nor compared, and I think I have now made appear to have been both *false and imperfect.*

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And now, having finished the main parts of my Answer, I must make a Review, that nothing which may be thought material may escape me. For that is the constant method of some men to cry up what is unanswered for unanswerable, although it were only passed over as not deserving it.

I did say in my former Letter, that you took great care in the Conference it self, to keep me from expecting any great ingenuity after it. The Author of the first Letter *desires Information what that care was.* I am very unwilling to expose your methods of managing Conferences; but I desire that Gentleman to be present at any of them, and he will find satisfaction enough. But Mr. M. as a proof of your fairness, insists (p. 2.) *on your desire to put things into writing.* Will Mr. M. say that you carried your self fairly and ingenuously as to the manner of the Conference? That you gave me no interruptions? used no fleeing behaviour? that you never offered to put things down against my sense, nor hindered me in setting it down? that you made no unhandsom reflections in the interlocutory part? If Charity be any part of Ingenuity, you shewed it abundantly: For, when you spake of *Churches in Communion with Rome*, Mr. T. said, What! and all other Churches must be *in Gehenna*? you replied with great Charity and Ingenuity, *that many a true word was spoke in jest.* If you are your self in earnest, I pray let us know for what reason you damn us all? Is it for want of *certainty in our Faith*? That is very far from being proved by you. And if you could prove it in your way, for all that I can see, you will damn almost all in the Church of Rome as well as all out of it. For, if this *Oral Tradition* be the *only certain way of Faith*, and all are damn'd who want such *certainty*, what will become of all those in the Church of Rome, who believe as little of the *Infallibility of Oral Tradition* as we do?

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But, to return to your Ingenuity in the Conference, I observe, that Mr. M. onely mentions *this Proposal of putting the Conference in Writing*, to shew your Ingenuity; he saith not a word of it as to your manner of managing it. And truly, I then thought he was ashamed of it; but whether he were or not, I am sure he had cause for it. He confesses there was *Noise, Wrangling, Confusions, Interruptions, Heat, Passion, Personal reflexions* (p. 3, 9, 15.) And all this while you were very fair and ingenuous, very meek and candid, very soft and obliging; not in the least boisterous, impertinent or provoking. Which all, who have been present at your Conferences, will set their hands to. Alas, Sir! How much are you wronged by being charged with Disingenuity in the Conference? You are onely forced sometimes to overcome your *Natural Repugnance to it*, as Mr. M. saith he was *in writing his Letter to me*.

There is one thing Mr. M. frequently insists upon, which I must give an Answer to; viz. That I was glad to put an end to the first Dispute; *That the Issue of it was such, that you could have no Temptation for forgery in the Account of it, which is not greatly for my Credit*, (p. 9.) *That I was beholding to Mr. T. for breaking it off*, (p. 20.) *That I was as little pleased with the true Copies as with the false ones*, (p. 23.) *That the Conference it self was as little to my Satisfaction as the worst account of it*, (p. 25.) These are very fine Insinuations; I must not say *Artificial*; for Mr. M. will no more like a word taken from *Arts*, than the word it self. If he means, that I was very little pleased with the Manner of your Conference, I do freely confess it; and none who have been present at your other Conferences will blame me for it. But if he thinks that I was unsatisfied with the *Grounds of Certainty* which I gave, I utterly deny it.

For I still assert the same thing, and abide by the Answer I then gave; and do still hold that the *universal Testimony of all Christian Churches is a sufficient Ground of absolute certainty to us as to the Rule of Faith*. And this is an Answer, I am so fully satisfied in, that neither then nor now do I fear any Objections against it. But I would not be drawn off from the main Point to another Debate; and because I resolved to stick there, I thought it most reasonable that Mr. T. should be yielded to, for breaking it off at the Point in question; which was not about the *true Parts of the Catholick Church*, but about the *true Ground of Certainty we had for our Faith*.

And when Mr. T. declared he had full satisfaction as to that, what Reason had I to go any farther?

As to the truest Copies of the Conference, I was not forward to disperse them; not out of any Mistrust of the Answers I gave; but because they contained onely short Heads and General Answers; for those who desire to see an Account of a Conference, expect to see a Relation of all that passed, or at least of all material Passages relating to it; and therefore onely a general Representation of it would seem dry and jejune, and not answer the expectation they had of the Relation of a Conference. But, as to the Matter it self, so far as it is truly set down (of which I have now given a fuller Account) I do abide by it. And, *if my Credit suffer by it*, I do assure you, it is not by reason of any Objection Mr. M. hath made against it, or any that I foresee can be made.

Mr. M. chargeth me with *disingenuous and unchristian proceeding* toward you, (p. 23.) This is a home Charge, and *not much indeed for my Credit*, if he can in the least make it good. But if not, I leave him to judge where the *disingenuous and unchristian proceeding* lies; and to remember his Application of the Mote and the

BEAM,

BEAM, (p. 15.) Whereon is the heavy Charge ground-
 ed? Why, forsooth, *When I heard of false and imper-
 fect Copies, I ought to have sent to you, to know whether
 they were given out by you.* What! When they came
 to my hands from those very Persons to whom you gave
 them? *But, I ought to have shewn you the Errors of
 them and desired their Amendment.* It was, indeed, a
 very likely and hopefull way of vindicating my self.
 When I knew from the very Person to whom you spake,
 what Boasts you had made of your victory; and what
 Publick Places you had read the Copies in, it was a ve-
 ry probable thing, that if I had shewed you the Falsity
 of them, You would have gone to those very Places
 and Persons and told them, "Gentlemen, I must beg all
 "your Pardons, for I communicated false Copies to you,
 "and told you idle and lying stories about the Confe-
 "rence; for I have been since with Dr. St. and he hath
 "demonstrated to me, that my Copy was not true,
 "although it were my own Copy, and that which I de-
 "livered to you for very true. Do you think, Sir, You
 could have overcome your *Natural Repugnance* so much
 as to have yielded to this Method of Satisfaction? If not,
 when I was assured so many Copies were dispersed in
 Town and Countrey, which you could not recall (if you
 intended it;) when I was called upon time after time
 by my Friends; and it was told me, something must be
 done towards my vindication; What could I doe more
 proper or effectual than to publish that Letter; which
 hath so much provoked Mr. M. as to make him over-
 come his *Natural Repugnance*, and to appear in Print?

*But yet there are other Circumstances which make
 my proceeding neither Ingenuous nor Christian.* As that,
The Letter was published so long after. That shews how
 unwilling I was to be brought to it; and nothing but
 mere Necessity could have overcome my *Natural Re-*

pugnance, in such a Case. For, as the Authour of the former Letter well observes, *I love to spare my own Pains. But I took the opportunity of your Absence.* Therein Mr. M. did me Injury. For, truly Sir, it was perfectly the same thing to me, whether you were at *Lond.* or *West-Chest.* Nay, the Argument would hold the other way, if it were true. For I heard of your talking of going to *Ch.* soon after the Conference; and that you told Persons you were *just going*; and I did believe you to be there, till I heard of some other Conferences of yours. I do not think my self bound to enquire after your Stays or Removes; but I know how you had done me wrong, and therefore Mr. M. can have no Reason to blame me for doing what was necessary for my own vindication.

Mr. M. charges me, (p. 35.) *with having too mean an Opinion of you.* If I be to blame in this, I hope you will take Care to rectifie it: but Mr. M. hath not done much towards it. However, he takes a notable Advantage, as he thinks, from hence: *We*, saith he, *will be contented to pass for Weak and Ignorant; and I shall be obliged to shew by whom you may be protected from Errour.* A very well compounded business! But what if it be not in my Power or any ones else to make you infallible? Did I ever promise or undertake any such thing? Or set up Infallible Bills? When I doe so, then come to me for such Directions. We never pretend to make any Persons Infallible, but to put them into a certain way to be saved; which we think is much better. And if men be honest and sincere in their Endeavours to know and doe the Will of God, we have the Word of God for it, that they are in the certain way to salvation; but if they could be kept from all Errour and yet not be sincerely Good, *Can Faith save him?* Jam. 2. 14. *What doth it profit, my Brethren, though a man say he hath Faith (even infallible Faith) and have not Works?* I have long wonder'd

at this kind of *Missionary Zeal*, as Mr. M. speaks, (p. 34.) *against Error*, and the want of *I know not what Infallibility*; when so much less Zeal is shewed against Mens Passions and Vices; whereas the Vertues of the Mind and of a good Life are far more excellent and usefull to Mankind than being kept from Involuntary Errours. But, saith Mr. M. *It is a most uncomfortable thing to be shewn, that you ought not to trust your Reason, and to be told you ought.* In answer to this suggestion I will tell you a very comfortable thing, and that is, the allowance God makes for Ignorance and Weakness. For, if God will not charge Involuntary Errours upon us; we may think our selves as safe, as if we were Infallible. What Reason we have, we ought to make use of for the best purposes; but if our Reason fail us, the Goodness of God will not if we be Sincere.

Yet Mr. M. cannot get it out of his head, but, *that it is my Task to give some distinguishing Mark for the finding out those Christians on whose Tradition we may safely rely for the Reception of the holy Scriptures.* How often must I repeat it, that it is none of my Task? And that, if the Testimony of all Christian Churches be a sufficient Ground of Certainty, I have no Reason to examine farther? As for Instance, suppose upon a *Lord Mayor's Day*, I ask of all the several Liveries and Companies, and other People, whether my *Lord Mayor* be gone by; and they all unanimously agree, that he is; have not I reason to be satisfied by this *universal Consent*? Ay but, Sir, saith Mr. M. you are to consider, that there was a great diversity in the Companies you met with; there was my *Lord Mayor's* own Company, and many besides, some whereof had no Charters confirmed to them, I desire you to tell me, which of the Companies had Charters and which not; for my part, I will believe none but the Testimony of those Companies which could produce

produce their Charters. But, say I, if our Dispute was about *legal Companies*, you say very well; but since I aim at no more, than knowing, whether my *Lord Mayor* be gone by or not; I think the Testimony of them all is sufficient, whether incorporated or not; whether they were of the *Orange or Blew Regiment*, or any other People in the Street; when I find them all to agree in the same thing, I have no reason to question the Certainty of it. I will not think so *poorly of your Understandings*, as to think it needs Application. But I must think so, if yet you think it my Task to *find out a distinguishing Mark between Churches*, when the universal Testimony of all Christian Churches is sufficient for the Certainty of our Faith; which Mr. M. so often grants was the Occasion and Subject of the Conference.

And now there is nothing remaining to be answered in Mr. M's Letter to me, but his learned Discourses about *Verbal Conferences* and *Coffee-Houses*; which will require no long Answer from me.

As to *Verbal Conferences*, they depend so much on the Temper, Ingenuity, Presence of Mind, and particular skill in Controversie which Persons have, that no certain Rule can be given about them. They may doe Good, or Hurt, be Usefull or Mischievous, as the Persons and circumstances are. And it is not the setting down some general Heads can prevent the Mischiefe of false Reports, as I have had too large and fresh Experience of it. Which ought to make every one more Carefull what sort of Persons he meets with upon such Occasions. I do not see, how any Man can be secure as to his Reputation after them, if they are such as run into Companies, frequent *Coffee-houses*, and are apt to boast and to talk much of themselves; as that "at such a time, saith one, I disputed with such a
* Man and these were my Arguments, and he gave such
trifling

" trifling Answers to them, that I wonder he should
 " have any Reputation. And to convince you, look
 " ye Gentlemen, here are the Notes of such a Con-
 " ference, do you mark what a pitifull Answer this
 " is; and then, when he was required to go farther
 " he Refused, and pretended business and want of
 " Time; so that upon the whole Matter, I conclude
 " him to be a *Mere Trifler*. All this while the Per-
 son concerned is at a Distance, and knows nothing
 of all this; but he is abused, and reproached at the
 Mercy of such Persons who look on an officious Lie
 as a Venial sin; especially when it is thought to
 serve a Good Cause. And when the injured Person
 comes to understand how he hath been used, he hath
 no way left but to publish a Vindication of himself;
 and so *Verbal Conferences*, must end in Writing Con-
 troversies; unless some effectual way could be found
 out to prevent mens partial and disingenuous Repre-
 senting them afterwards. There is too great Reason to be-
 lieve that those who are most Impertinent in a Dispute
 will be so after it; and great Talkers are commonly
 great Boasters; especially when they hope to recom-
 mend themselves by their pretended Victories, and
 their *Missionary Zeal of disputing in Coffee-houses*.

A thing which Mr. M. observes (p. 34.) *the Children
 of the Reformation are little acquainted with.*

And I do not like the Mother of these Children
 a jot the less for it. For Religion is a grave and
 serious thing and ought to be treated with a Respect
 due to the Concernments of it. I am far from being
 a Friend to any *Seditious, idle, or profane Discourses*
in those places; but yet methinks it looks very oddly
 to turn Places of Diversion into Schools of Disputing.
 And if such a *Missionary Zeal* prevails, I suppose the
 Keepers of those Houses will give little thanks to the
 Promoters

Promoters of it; for Men do not love to drink their warm liquour in Mood and Figure; nor to lace their *Coffee* with Controversies.

Mr. M. represents me (p. 33.) as one that thought it a Crime to go to *Coffee-houses*. Which is a notable device to make all the Gentlemen who frequent them my Enemies. Whereas I onely mentioned your reading your Paper in *Coffee-houses*, and there boasting of your Conference, wherein he might be sure I would not be present to contradict him. But this is a distinguishing Mark of Mr. M's Ingenuity.

I shall mention one more, and conclude this Letter. Mr. M. confesses many Lies are told in *Coffee-houses*, (p. 33.) and I have some Reason to believe him.

But if, saith he, all Places are to be avoided, wherein Lies are told I am afraid Dr. St. would run the hazard of being silenced for want of a Pulpit which might be ventured on. This is such an obliging Complement to the London Clergy to compare their Pulpits to *Coffee-houses* for Lying, that it is beyond my skill to return it. But if there be so little Truth in our Pulpits as Mr. M. suggests (which I am sure he can never prove) yet the constant Loyalty which hath been preached there, might have made Mr. M. a little more civil to them, than to compare them to *Coffee-houses*; wherein himself complains of *Seditions, idle and profane Discourses*.

I am,

Sir,

Your humble Servant,

E. S.

London, Apr. 21.
1687.

There is in the Press, and will speedily be published, an Answer to the Reasons of Edward Schute, Minister of France, for his Conversion to the Roman Catholick Faith and Communion: Sold by H. Morlock, at the Phoenix in St. Paul's Church-yard.

